



**121 KATE STREET**

**WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**

City of Winnipeg  
Historical Buildings Committee  
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## 121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE

Commercial, financial and wholesale interests quickly changed the face of Winnipeg's downtown district after the city's 1874 incorporation. The residential districts throughout the area (Plate 1) were replaced by block upon block of the mammoth commercial and warehouse structures needed for the new wave of business ventures (Plate 2). Thousands of new citizens flooded into the area to take advantage of the prosperity of the region and the promise of things to come. New residential districts, our first suburbs, began to develop as the need for more appropriate housing out-distanced the existing supply.

One area that saw early development was the region west of Main Street and immediately north of the burgeoning warehouse and downtown district. Notre Dame and William avenues became the major thoroughfares of the neighbourhood and, in order to save time, city fathers began naming streets running off Notre Dame alphabetically. Kate Street, for example, is found between Lydia and Juno Streets, the latter follows Isabel Street.

The local papers filled in late 1881 and throughout 1882 with advertisements for vacant lots throughout the area.

One of the local daily papers reported in the fall of 1882 that William Ashdown Sr. had built a 2-storey brick veneer single family home on the east side of Kate Street between William and Bannatyne avenues costing \$4,200.<sup>1</sup> Interestingly, it shared a back yard with 120 Juno Street, also built in 1882 by William's brother George (Plates 3 and 4).<sup>2</sup>

What is unclear is whether this report is correct, or if it was William Ashdown Sr.'s son, William Ashdown, who built and lived in the home (see Appendix I for Ashdown information).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Winnipeg Daily Sun, September 23, 1882, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Manitoba Daily Free Press, December 30, 1881, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> The son, William, is referenced in different sources as William S. and William M.

## STYLE

The 121 Kate Street residence is a reduced, unadorned example of the Queen Anne style home. This type of architecture had become popular in North America by 1880 and continued to be used extensively into the new century. First popularized by a group of English architects led by Richard Norman Shaw, it was based on late medieval models of the preceding Elizabethan and Jacobean eras.<sup>4</sup> Elements of the style include steeply pitched, irregularly shaped roofs, usually organized with a front-facing dominant gable. Other elements include bay windows, an asymmetrical facade and the presence of a porch, either partial or full-width.<sup>5</sup>

It was used in most districts of Winnipeg on both small and large dwellings. Table 1 lists Queen Anne Revival dwellings designated by the Historical Buildings Committee. Sir Hugh John Macdonald House, Dalnavert, 61 Carlton Street, is one of the city's finest examples of the style (Plate 5), as are the three buildings on Edmonton Street (Plates 6-8). The exteriors of these structures have been well preserved and display many ornamental elements. The Kelly House and the Ashdown House are the only pre-1885 buildings on this list, the Kelly House features more ornamental detailing, much of which is still present (Plate 9).

## CONSTRUCTION

This L-shaped house utilizes cream coloured brick laid in stretcher pattern. Raised brick quoins provide one of the few decorative elements on the building (Plate 10). The foundation is built of rock-faced cut stone and the roof has both gable and hip ends (Plate 11). The original structure, supported by wood beams and posts (Plate 12) included a partial porch used as an entrance (Plate 13); this later was removed in favour of the present concrete steps and the home is covered by a truncated hipped roof with front facing gable.

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<sup>4</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 263.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

**TABLE 1**  
**QUEEN ANNE REVIVAL HOUSES DESIGNATED  
 BY THE HISTORICAL BUILDINGS COMMITTEE, 1979-2008**

ADDRESS	NAME	GRADE	YEAR BUILT	PRESENT USE
Adelaide St., 88	Kelly House	III	1882	Offices
Broadway, 545	Klinic Building	III	1904	Offices
Carlton St., 61	Macdonald House (Dalnavert)	I	1895	Museum
Edmonton St., 26	John Walter Harris House	III	1902	Offices
Edmonton St., 368-70	Duplex	III	1901	Offices
Edmonton St., 454	Benard House	III	1903	Private residence
Hargrave St., 55	Glines House	III	1906	Converted into apartment block
Kate St., 121	William Ashdown House	III	1882	Private residence
Logan Ave., 444	Penrose House	III	1894	Moved from Bell Ave., 1987
Scott St., 137	Graham House	III	1902	Offices
West Gate, 134	Monk House	III	1895	Private residence

## DESIGN

The brick walls of the front (west) façade rest on the stone walls of the foundation (Plate 14). The south end extends outward, with brick quoins highlighting the corners. This section includes a one-storey bay window on the main floor and two rectilinear window openings set in wood frames and radiating brick heads on the second floor finished by an unadorned front facing gable end. The recessed northern portion holds the raised entrance with similar rectilinear window openings set in wood frames and radiating brick heads on the second floor.

The north façade features a second entrance and similar windows on both levels (Plate 15). The south and rear (east) elevations feature similar window openings on both floor and an attached brick chimney is found on the rear façade (Plates 16 and 17).

## **INTERIOR**

Much of the original interior of the William Ashdown House's has been removed or replaced, although the basic layout of the main floor remains intact, as does the wood accenting of the staircase and many of the finished wood window frames (Plates 18-20).

## **INTEGRITY**

The building occupies its original site on Kate Street. Cracks in the brick exterior walls and stone foundation suggests structural issues with this building, likely do to its age. The original entrance porch has been removed and many of the original window units have been replaced.

## **STREETSCAPE**

The William Ashdown House is a contributor to the Kate Street streetscape that has evolved from a mainly residential neighbourhood to include warehouses, large apartment blocks and a public school across the street.

## **ARCHITECT**

No architect has yet been identified as the designer of 121 Kate Street.

## **PERSON**

While much is known about William S. Ashdown's brothers - James H., the merchant and mayor, and George, the M.L.A. and mayor of Morden<sup>6</sup> - less is known about their father, William and their brother William (see Appendix I for biographical information).

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<sup>6</sup> Winnipeg Free Press, May 15, 1939, p. 2.

The 1885 Henderson's Directory lists two men, John E. Ennis (contractor) and Joseph Metcalfe (dry goods), as having taken up residence on Kate Street. In 1890, City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, list implement agent John O'Donohue became the tenant.<sup>7</sup> The property is listed as vacant in 1893 and in 1895 it was owned and occupied by Israel and Anna L. Bennetto with five people living in the home, two under the age of 16.<sup>8</sup>

Bennetto (Plate 21), a photographer, was born in Hamilton, Canada West (now Ontario) in April 1860.<sup>9</sup> He came to Winnipeg in 1880 and established a photography supply business located at 436 Main Street, which he operated until 1906. He died in Winnipeg in June 1946. The Bennetto family left 121 Kate Street in 1915 when two men, A.R. Manning and C.V. Cummings of the Northern Construction Company of Montreal, bought the building and turned it into a multiple-suite rental property. In 1934, farmer J.J. Hildebrand, bought the home and lived there for six years. The City of Winnipeg took over the structure in 1941; a year later, the property was sold to Erik O. and Tekla U. Moberg.<sup>10</sup> Erik Moberg, a carpenter, and his family lived in the home until 1986. In September of 1987, the executor of the Moberg estate sold the house to John A. and Maria F. Cardosa and family.

## EVENT

There is no known significant historical event connected with this building.

## CONTEXT

This home was built at the beginning of the modern growth period of Winnipeg's development, one related to the construction of Canada's first transcontinental railway, the Canadian Pacific Railway,

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<sup>7</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Ward 2, #614080 (old number 10428). Below as ARo.

<sup>8</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>9</sup> "Israel Bennetto (1860-1946)," Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, revised 2021.

<sup>10</sup> ARo.

through Winnipeg and what would become Western Canada in the early 1880s. Depressions and economic downswings would slow or stop this trend periodically, but the 1880 to 1915 period was a time of incredible growth and modernization of all phases of life in Manitoba's capital.

### **LANDMARK**

The William Ashdown house would not be considered a conspicuous structure outside of its immediate neighbourhood.

## APPENDIX I

### ASHDOWN FAMILY AND OWNERSHIP OF 121 KATE STREET

William Ashdown Sr. is attributed with building the house on Kate Street in a September 1882 local newspaper article.<sup>1</sup> He was born in London, England on June 10, 1819, and emigrated to Canada in the early 1850s. In the Canada Census for 1851, he is listed in Etobicoke, Canada West (now Ontario) with wife Jane (1820-1902) and four children. The couple would ultimately have six children:<sup>2</sup>

William (ca.1840-pre-1924)  
Ellen (ca.1843-?)  
James Henry (1844-1924)  
Julia (ca.1847-?)  
George (1851-1939)  
Alfred (ca.1855-?)  
Emma (ca.1864-?)<sup>3</sup>

The family moved to Toronto where William taught school and ran a store but when the store failed in 1862, the family moved to a bush farm in Brant County, Canada West.<sup>4</sup> He and his family came to Manitoba in the early 1870s, following their son James H. who had set up his hardware company in Winnipeg in 1870. Father William and brothers William and George also worked for the J.H. Ashdown Hardware Company. The parents and daughter Emma are listed in Selkirk, Manitoba in the Canada Census, 1881. Eventually, the Ashdowns retired and moved in with their son James at 337 Broadway.<sup>5</sup>

Eldest son William was born in England ca.1840, married Mary Jane (also as Margaret Jane,<sup>6</sup> birth

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<sup>1</sup> Winnipeg Daily Sun, September 23, 1882, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Canada Census, 1881; and “James Henry Ashdown (1844-1924),” Memorable Manitobans, Manitoba Historical Society website, updated Feb. 27, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Manitoba Free Press, September 23, 1882, p. 8; and Canada Census, 1891.

<sup>4</sup> David G. Burley, “Ashdown, James Henry,” Dictionary of Canadian Biography, Vol. XV (1921-1930), online edition, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Henderson’s Directory, 1900.

<sup>6</sup> Winnipeg Tribune, June 25, 1924, p. 17.

name unknown) in Canada West and, according to the 1881 Canada Census the couple had five children:

Annie (ca.1864-?)  
Julie (ca.1869-?)  
Nellie (ca.1871-?)  
Emma (ca.1873-?)  
James (ca.1875-?)  
William (ca.1877-?)

Son William (no middle initial) is listed as a manager, in the Canada Census, 1881 and living northwest of Winnipeg in Marquette, MB. It is unknown when he died but a 1924 newspaper reference to his bother James' will names his widow, Margaret Jane, as a beneficiary.<sup>7</sup>

In terms of occupancy of 121 Kate Street, there is no definitive answer. City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, 1882-1895, which would be considered the most accurate source, does not include any reference to a “William Ashdown Senior” or a “William Ashdown” with a middle initial (see Table One).<sup>8</sup> Clerk William Ashdown lives in the Kate Street house in 1882. It would seem, given the limited biographical information available, that this is William Ashdown “Junior”. The following year, it is an “agent” in the house and from 1884-1886, it is a “gentleman” residing in the house. Again, using the limited information, it would suggest that the “gentleman” is William Ashdown Senior. It is unknown who the “agent” or “bookkeeper” William Ashdown refers to.

Henderson's Directory for Winnipeg (see Table Two),<sup>9</sup> which would not be considered as an accurate source, lists William Ashdown, no employment at 5 Kate St. separately from William Ashdown Sr., no employment and no residential address, suggesting that the son was the original occupant of the house. William S. Ashdown, presumably “Junior” is also mentioned in several years of the Directory, but not connected to the Kate Street home and then in the late 1890s at the home of J.H. Ashdown on Broadway.

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<sup>7</sup> Loc. cit.

<sup>8</sup> City of Winnipeg Assessment Rolls, Ward 2, #614080 (old number 10428).

<sup>9</sup> Henderson's Directory, Winnipeg, 1880-1918.

**TABLE ONE**

**121 KATE STREET – ASSESSMENT ROLL INFORMATION**

1882 West Ward	William Ashdown, merchant, lives on Ross Street (Lots 59/60), Spencer Subdivision of the J. Ross Estate, \$500 building William Ashdown, clerk, lives on Kate Street, \$2,000 building (also owns vacant lots in area) William Ashdown, accountant, owns vacant lots in area
1883 Ward 4	William Ashdown, no employment, owns vacant lots William Ashdown, agent, lives on Kate Street
1884	William Ashdown, gentleman, lives on Kate Street, 3 in the household and owns other property William Ashdown, merchant, owns vacant property in the ward
1886	William Ashdown, gentleman, lives on Kate Street William Ashdown, bookkeeper, lives at 160/162 Ross Ave., 3 in household
1890	William Ashdown, no employment, owner of Kate Street, tenant is John O'Donohue, implements dealer William Ashdown, clerk, lives at 19 Arthur St. This building and 21 Arthur Street owned by James H. Ashdown William Ashdown, no employment, owns 259 Jemima (tenant is Donald McCorqudale, fitter) William Ashdown, no employment, owns 160 & 160½ Ross Ave. William Ashdown, bookkeeper, owns vacant property
1893	William Ashdown, no employment, owner of 121 Kate Street, vacant William Ashdown, no employment, owns several other houses in Ward 4
1895	William Ashdown, no employment, lives at 57 Arthur St. (2 in household), James H. Ashdown is the owner (he lives at 549 Arthur St.) William Ashdown, no employment, lives at 524 Ross Ave. and also owns 520 Ross Ave. (vacant) Israel Bennetto, photographer, lives at 121 Kate St. (5 total in household, 2 under 16 years of age)

**TABLE TWO**

**121 KATE STREET – HENDERSON’S DIRCTORY INFORMATION**

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>INFORMATION</b>
1880	George, William Sr. (merchant) and James Ashdown listed
1882	George, William (merchant) and James Ashdown listed
1883	William Ashdown, no employment, lives at 7 Kate St.
1884	William Ashdown, no employment, 5 Kate St.; William Sr., no employment – no mention of Wm S. Ashdown
1888	William Ashdown, bookkeeper, 19 Arthur – under “Kate” no odd numbered building between Bannatyne & McDermot avenues
1892-1896	William S. Ashdown, clerk at J.H. Ashdown, lives at 57 Arthur St. 1896 – no house listed on the east side of Kate
1898-1899	William S. Ashdown, clerk at J.H. Ashdown, lives on Broadway corner Hargrave (J.H. Ashdown’s home)
1900-1904	William, no employment, 337 Broadway (J.H. Ashdown’s home)
1905	Only J.H. listed under Ashdown

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Plate 1 – McDermot Avenue looking west from Main Street, ca.1883. ([Archives of Manitoba.](#))



Plate 2 – Warehouse District, ca.1905, showing the scale of development over the previous 20 years. ([Archives of Manitoba.](#))

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Plate 3 – George Ashdown (1851-1939), ca.1903. (Archives of Manitoba, Legislative Assemblies, 11th Session, 1903-1907.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 4 – George Ashdown House, 120 Juno Street, front (east) façade, 2023. (M. Peterson, 2023.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 5 – Hugh John Macdonald House, Dalnavert, 61 Carlton Street, front (west) façade, 2024. (M. Peterson, 2024.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 6 – John Walter Harris House, 26 Edmonton Street, front (east) and north façades, 2024. (M. Peterson, 2024.)

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Plate 7 – Hoover and Town Duplex, 368 Edmonton Street, front (east) and south façades, 2024. (M. Peterson, 2024.)

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Plate 8 – Henri Bernard House, 454 Edmonton Street, front (east) façade, 2023. (M. Peterson, 2023.)

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Plate 9 – Michael Kelly House, 88 Adelaide Street, front (east) and south façades, 2024. (M. Peterson, 2024.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 10 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, southeast corner, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 11 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, foundation detail, front (west) façade, 2025.  
(M. Peterson, 2025.)

121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE



Plate 12 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, wood beams and posts, basement, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE

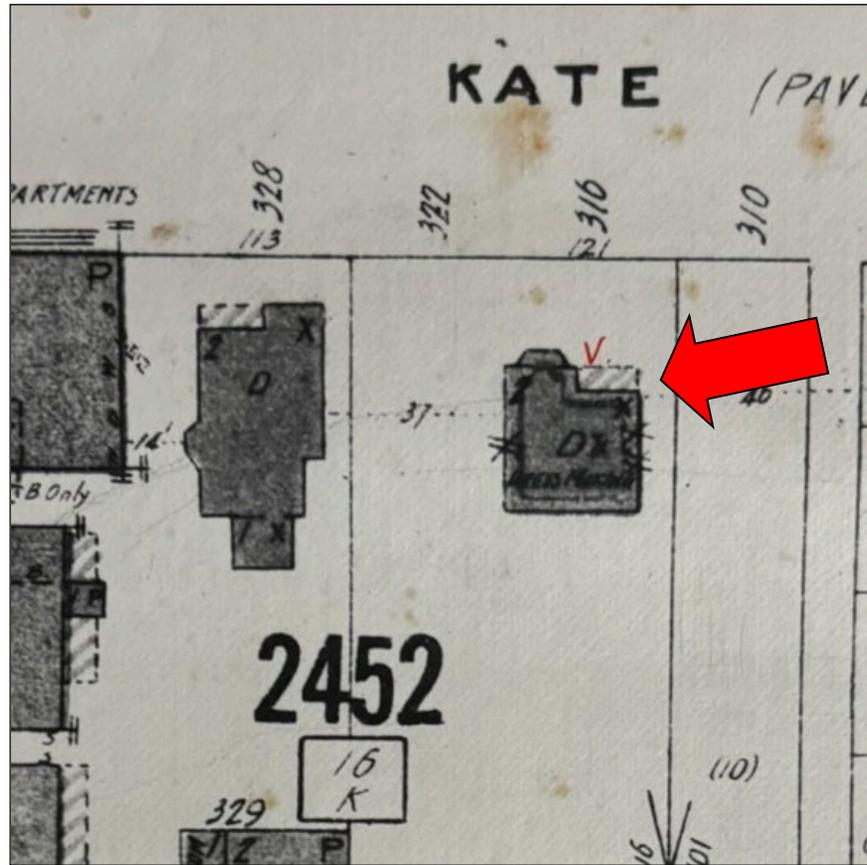


Plate 13 – City of Winnipeg Fire Atlas, Vol. II, Sheet 245, December 1917, showing the original frame porch attached to the northwest corner of the building (arrow).

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 14 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, front (west) and south façades, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 15 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, north façade, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 16 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, south façade, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 17 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, rear (east) façade, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 18 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, main floor, southwest corner, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

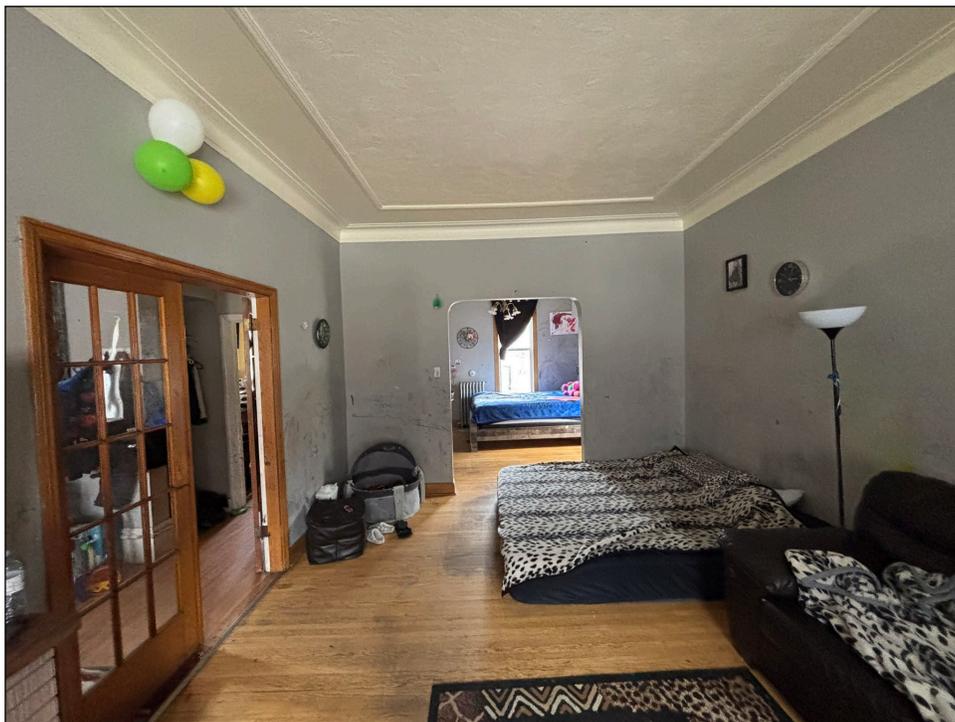


Plate 19 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, main floor, south side looking east, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE

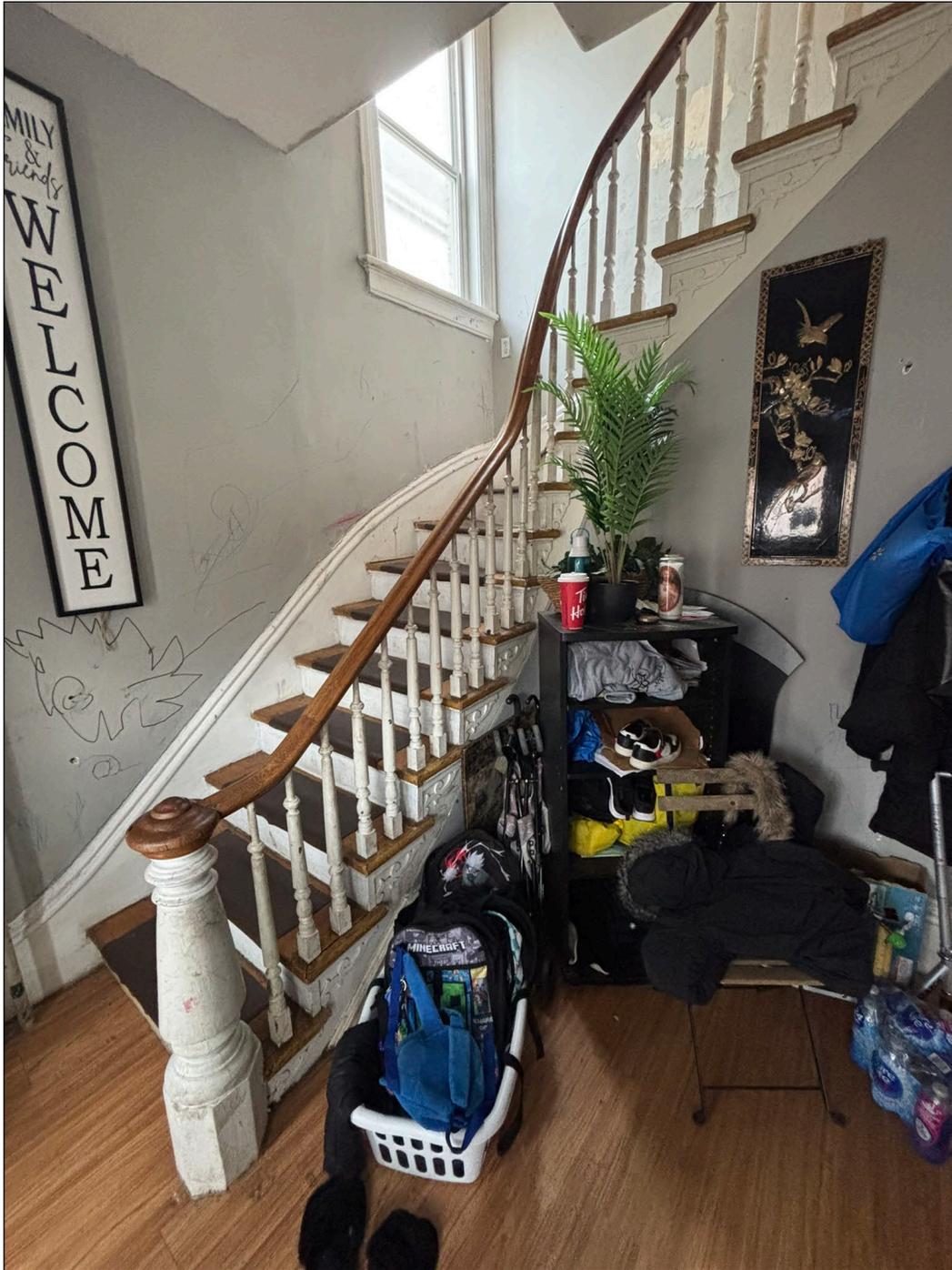


Plate 20 – William Ashdown House, 121 Kate Street, staircase, 2025. (M. Peterson, 2025.)

**121 KATE STREET – WILLIAM ASHDOWN HOUSE**



Plate 21 – Israel Bennetto, ca.1884. ([City of Winnipeg Archives.](#))